

LOUDOUN SWMS PROCESS EVALUATION

Background. The Loudoun Strategic Watershed Management Solutions (SWMS) is a collaborative initiative to coordinate existing watershed efforts and define a shared vision for managing Loudoun County's watersheds. A stakeholder group was convened by Loudoun County's Department of Building and Development and facilitated by the University of Virginia's Institute for Environmental Negotiation (IEN). The 55-member Loudoun Strategic Watershed Management Solutions (SWMS) Team, consisting of representatives of 41 different development, agriculture, conservation, county, state, federal and citizen interests, worked over the course of four intensive meetings (February to June 2006) to develop a strategy for watershed planning in Loudoun County.

This Evaluation was provided to participants at the 4th and final SWMS Team meeting. The responses below are based on 36 respondents.

36 Responses									
1=completely disagree, 2=strongly disagree, 3=disagree, 4=indifferent, 5=agree, 6=strongly agree, 7=completely agree						% of People that thought the aspect of the process was			
a = important, z = unimportant			Lowest Rating	Highest Rating	Average Rating		Important	Unimportant	No Comment
The Outcome									
An Agreement was reached			3.0	7.0	5.4		83%	0%	17%
The agreement was ratified by everyone needed to implement it.			2.0	7.0	5.3		78%	6%	17%
The areement will likely be implemented			3.0		4.8		81%	0%	19%
The outcome satisfies my basic interest			2.0		5.3		56%	17%	28%
The overall situation is better than before			4.0		5.5		72%	0%	28%
The outcome is likely better than what I could get from another process			3.0	7.0	5.3		50%	19%	31%
This process gave me a greater sense of empowerment to impact decisions in my community			3.0	7.0	4.9		33%	36%	31%
Working Relationships									
The process improved communication among participants			5.0	7.0	5.8		78%	0%	22%
The process helped build trust among participants			2.0	7.0	5.0		61%	11%	28%
I improved my understanding about the issues and others' views and values			3.0	7.0	5.4		69%	3%	28%
The process improved my ability to resolve public issues			3.0	7.0	4.7		33%	28%	39%
Quality of the Process									
Everyone who wanted to participate had a fair chance to do so			2.0	7.0	6.0		78%	0%	22%
All relevant issues were raised and addressed			2.0	7.0	5.2		72%	0%	28%
Everyone had access to the information needed to make good decisions			3.0	7.0	5.5		72%	0%	28%
Information we used was relevant and up to date			3.0		5.3		72%	0%	28%
The process fostered information gathering and learning as a group			4.0		5.6		61%	8%	31%
The group considered different options for resolving the issue			3.0		5.6		67%	6%	28%
People at the table reported to their constituents on a periodic basis			4.0		4.8		50%	14%	36%
Participants had a say in how the process was run			3.0		5.7		64%	11%	25%
Gains and losses were fairly distributed among all participants			3.0		5.0		44%	22%	33%
The process was efficient. It was time and money well spent			3.0	7.0	5.4		67%	3%	31%

Was the process helpful? If so, how? If not, please explain.	
1	Yes
2	Yes, it was good to hear everyone's comments
3	It was good to meet with a broad array of people, but it did not change the activities my organization takes part in.
4	Yes
5	
6	Yes, pulled together groups with diverse interests to start watershed planning
7	Gathering stakeholders critical
8	Yes, needed to happen 20 years ago
9	We could not have worked with such a large and diverse group (on such a complex issue) without this process
10	Different approach to an old problem good idea
11	Yes, bringing all sides together
12	
13	Yes, promoted discussion and understanding of stakeholder interests
14	
15	Yes, in getting different interests to agree on plan
16	Not sure, need to What and How the plan will be used
17	Yes, coordination probably wouldn't have been feasible w/o leadership skills and facilitation
18	Good forum to meet face-to-face those interested in watershed planning in the county
19	Yes, kudos on working through the process before getting to far into the planning effort
20	Collaborative process has to be a consensus process to work.. It was!
21	Was only notified of its existence prior to last session
22	Yes, I did not participate until the last meeting. However, it seems as if the group has come together.
23	Visibility for a serious problem
24	
25	Yes, got all the interested parties together and talking
26	Yes, good informal discussion and facts revealed
27	Yes, but I am uncertain on eventual implementation, as it is highly dependent on the BOS allowing staff to fulfill obligations
28	
29	
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32	
33	
34	It seemed that agreement was reached on the document. However, the solutions were very limited as the group was approaching the problems from the same direction
35	
36	Yes, we're certainly further ahead than we'd have been without it.

Did the facilitator(s) fulfill his or her responsibilities? (Check all that apply)		
c = check	% checked off	
<i>impartiality</i>	81%	
<i>Process design</i>	69%	
<i>honoring time commitments</i>	75%	
<i>ecouraging participation</i>	92%	
<i>coordinating meeting logistics</i>	83%	
<i>documenting agreement</i>	89%	
<i>confidentiality</i>	50%	
<i>development and support of ground rules</i>	83%	
<i>keeping group focused</i>	92%	
<i>promoting civil discussion</i>	81%	
<i>helping group invent solutions and build agreement</i>	78%	
<i>implementing agreement</i>	53%	

How could this process be improved?	
1	More from board and local joe (citizen)
2	Limit on discussions being monopolized by a few groups with an agenda.
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	Keep it going
8	
9	
10	
11	First time through the process objective seemed fine to me.
12	We dug too deep into the technical aspects. This made the document harder to support and made the meetings last longer. We should have kept pulling back to assure we were at a high-level policy perspective.
13	
14	Too many drafts of the same report issued. Typically, I would make up more meetings w/ a shorter duration. As private sector cannot block the subsequent draft w/o example- 6/9 doc vs 6/12 doc
15	1. If the stakeholders would show up that you invited. 2. More visibility in the county- papers, local channel
16	Needed an example plan on projected standards
17	
18	
19	Overall it was great. Having smaller working groups in the future steering committee will help w/ the details
20	Unsure
21	Session not completed yet- won't know until it is complete
22	No specific recommendations
23	Must have participation from the top
24	
25	
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33	
34	Often information was provided with a week deadline. It was difficult for someone who does a lot of field work to be able to fully participate.

What process would you have used to address this situation if you had not participated in this process?

c = check

Total	Percent
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No action

2

6%

Litigation

1

3%

Proposed legislation

4

11%

Citizen petition

3

8%

Direct
discussion with
decision
maker(s)

20

56%

Lobbying

7

19%

Citizen initiative

8

22%

Other (please describe)

2

6%

3: Continuing to do my job in conservation

10: there is no forced law for watershed protection. Conflict between development and preservation interests will never be resolved without that force of law.

Compare this process to your next best option (from #5 above). Which of the two would most likely:

c = check

		Total	Percent
Cost less?	this process	4	11%
	other option	15	42%
Take less time?	this process	11	31%
	other option	10	28%
Improve communication among participants?	this process	24	67%
	other option	0	0%
Improve trust among participants?	this process	19	53%
	other option	3	8%
Produce a more effective, lasting outcome?	this process	16	44%
	other option	1	3%

Would you recommend a similar process to address other issues?					
1	yes				
2					
3		Depends on the issue... the real sticking points like land use and zoning were not tackled in our meetings			
4	yes				
5					
6	yes				
7	yes				
8					
9	yes				
10					
11	yes				
12					
13	yes				
14	yes				
15	yes				
16	yes				
17	yes				
18		good planning always requires consensus building			
19	yes				
20	yes	most definitely- good job IEN and county			
21					
22	yes				
23	yes				
24					
25	yes				
26	yes				
27	yes				
28					
29					
30					
31					
32					
33					
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36					

What other comments or feedback do you have about the SWMS process?

1	
2	Discussions were dominated by small group
3	Overall, worthwhile and necessary, but sometimes quite tedious
4	Excellent process and facilitators- lots of ground to cover- managed well
5	
6	good at finding common ground- contentious issues will not easily be resolved by consensus
7	
8	Excellent facilitation!!!
9	
10	Helped lead the development of the Catoctin TMDL plan. Public participation is extremely difficult to accomplish. We were not successful in this effort. Groups with an iron in the fire will be there, but the general public???
11	
12	
13	I had expected to see more emphasis on watershed planning and less emphasis on how others should develop and implement a watershed plan
14	
15	Good job, thanks- hope you hip us in the future
16	Need to have a larger number of development representatives
17	Productivity is a kep issue- all government bodies would profit from this approach to leadership skills
18	
19	
20	Press coverage and word of mouth have evoked mostly positive commennts
21	Better identify stakeholders from the outset
22	Good job.
23	
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26	Great job!
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36	At times, (and in the interest of time) facilitators moved ahead too quickly- it would seem tht we'd be discussing something that had "touched some nerves" and we'd move on before the subject had really been talked through.